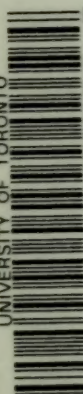


176

N 421

New Tracts for the Times

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00459152 5

PROBLEMS OF SEX

o o

J. ARTHUR THOMSON

AND

PATRICK GEDDES

HQ
31
T5



Presented to the

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

by the

ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980

New Tracts for the Times

PROBLEMS OF SEX

NEW TRACTS FOR THE TIMES

Promoted by the National Council of Public Morals, Holborn Hall, London, W.C.

TRACTS PUBLISHED

"The Problem of Race-Regeneration." By Dr. Havelock Ellis (Editor, Contemporary Science Series, etc.).

"The Methods of Race-Regeneration." By C. W. Saleeby, M.D., F.R.S.E., F.Z.S. (Author of "Parenthood and Race Culture," etc.).

"The Declining Birth-Rate — Its National and International Significance." By A. Newsholme, M.D.

"Problems of Sex." By Prof. J. Arthur Thomson and Prof. P. Geddes.

"National Ideals and Race-Regeneration." By Rev. R. F. Horton, M.A., D.D.

"Womanhood and Race-Regeneration." By Mary Scharlieb, M.D., M.S.

TRACTS IN PREPARATION

"Literature — The Word of Life or of Death." By Rev. William Canon Barry, D.D.

"Modern Industrialism and Race-Regeneration." By C. F. G. Masterman, M.A., M.P.

"Religion and Race-Regeneration." By Rev. F. B. Meyer, D.D.

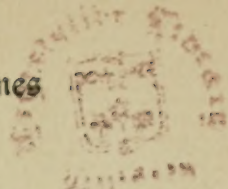
"Social Environment and Moral Progress." By A. Russell Wallace, O.M., LL.D., F.R.S.

"The Spiritual Life and Race-Regeneration." By the Bishop of Durham.

"Education and Race-Regeneration." By Sir John Gorst, LL.D., K.C., F.R.S.

31808

New Tracts for the Times



PROBLEMS OF SEX

*Leons.
New Tracts*

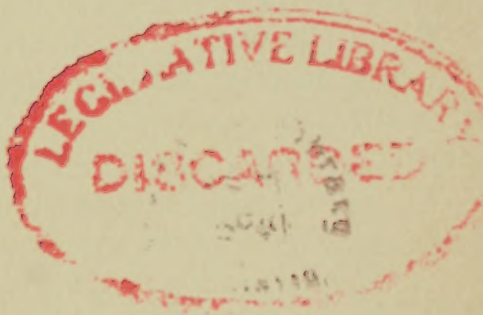
BY

Professor J. ARTHUR THOMSON
(*University of Aberdeen*)

1861-19

AND

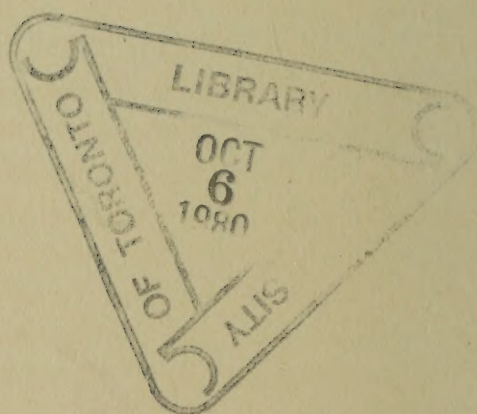
Professor PATRICK GEDDES
(*University of St. Andrews*)
Authors of "The Evolution of Sex"



NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY

1912

HQ
31
15



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

By the

REV. JAMES MARCHANT

THESE Tracts might have been called "New Tracts for New Times," since they interpret the signs and prophecies of a new world in the making, demanding the application of loftier ideals, more widely embracing principles, and surer methods of advance than have hitherto prevailed. They do not merely deplore and combat the manifest evils of the past and the present changing conditions, but reveal the foundations of a richer civilisation. The era of destructive criticism, of improving material environment alone, of lavish care for a short season of the unfit merely to turn them adrift at the critical age, of reliance upon forms and drugs, hospitals and penitentiaries, police and prisons and upon unfettered liberty to correct its own abuses, is mercifully passing away. We are living in a transition period, but nearer the future than the past. The wonderful nineteenth century seems already to have become history, and the first decade of the twentieth century has closed. The new spirit of the age, which appeared in wondrous guise on the horizon at the watch of the centuries, is becoming articulate. It is evident to all who possess the historic vision that we are living in the twilight before the dawn. The rapid, ruthless

New Tracts for the Times

progress and verily bewildering discoveries and developments of the latter half of the nineteenth century, the opening up of virgin fields of reform and of untrodden and unsuspected paths of advance, were heralds of a new day, of the nearness of the Kingdom of God.

These Tracts, small in bulk, but written by eminent authors, deal with these profound and commanding themes from this inspiring outlook. If they revert to outstanding present-day evils, it is because these menace the future and are a crime against posterity. Account is taken of the persistent and ominous demand for the divorce of religion from morals and education; of the lowering of the ideal of marriage and the substitution of a temporary contract for that permanent union which is necessary, to take no higher ground, for the nurture and education of the next generation; of the commercial employment of married women, resulting, to a serious extent, in the neglect and disruption of family life and the displacement and unemployment of men; and of the economic, social, and selfish influences which involve late marriages and an ever-falling birth-rate. The writers consider the grave and urgent questions of the wastage of child-life; the weakening and pollution of the link between the generations; and the uncontrolled multiplication of the degenerate, who threaten to swamp in a few generations the purer elements of our race. They examine the disquieting signs of physical deterioration; the prevalence of vice, the increase of insanity and feeble-mindedness, and their exhaustless drain upon free-flowing charity and

General Introduction

the national purse; the wide circulation of debasing books and papers which imply the existence, to a deplorable extent, of low ideals amongst a multitude of readers; and some of the manifold evils of our industrial system which cause the hideous congestion of slumdom with its irreparable loss of the finer sensibilities, of beauty, sweetness and light. These and like grievous ills of the social body are treated in the "New Tracts for the Times," from the moral and spiritual standpoint, by constructive methods of redemption, with the knowledge of our corporate responsibility and in relation to their bearing on the future of the race.

The supreme and dominant conception running through these Tracts is the Regeneration of the Race. They strike not the leaden note of despair, but the ringing tones of a new and certain hope. The regenerated race is coming to birth; the larger and nobler civilisation is upon us. It is already seen that it is criminal to live at the expense of the future, that children must be wisely and diligently educated for parenthood, that vice must be sapped at its foundations, that it is much more radically necessary to improve the condition of the race through parentage than through change of environment, that the emphasis must shift from rescue to prevention. These Tracts turn the searchlight of the twentieth century upon such problems and seek to hasten the time when true religion will occupy its rightful place in our human lives, and woman her true place in the home and society, and industry will not deaden and demoralise, and life will be happier,

New Tracts for the Times

sweeter and holier for every man, woman and child.

These Tracts must awaken a sensitive, enlightened social conscience throughout Great and Greater Britain, which is being welded into a more compact Empire, and give voice and new life to the long-silent and thwarted aspirations for a regenerated humanity.

In their several ways, the authors of these "New Tracts for the Times," each being alone responsible for his or her own contribution, adopt this bracing and hopeful attitude towards the transcendent problems which it is the object of the promoters to elucidate.

J. M.

*National Council of Public Morals,
Holborn Hall, London, W. C.
September, 1911.*

INTRODUCTION

By the common consent of right-minded people, the love of a mother for her children is ranked not only as the finest expression of what is best in the life of humanity, but also as one of the strongest forces making for righteousness. Everyone counts on it practically as the most reliable of all the springs of conduct; every man bows before it as something sacred, whether it be in squaw or in Madonna. It is disinterested to a degree that even a father cannot understand, and it is absolutely without reservations. Organic, instinctive and continuous far beyond paternal love, it is also more spiritual: in its higher reaches it attains to a sympathetic insight which is akin to divination and to a persistence of devotion before which heroism pales. This being so, the spectacle of a mother who does not love her children sends a chill to the heart; and still more of her whose love sours and perverts into cruelty. The world would be cold and mad indeed if these maladies should spread; and it is one of the gravest proofs of the need of inquiries and efforts in public morals, that the great and widespread Society for the Protection of Children should show us so many evidences that in our modern disorder their occurrence is more frequent than we commonly realise. Again, it is hardly

Introduction

less of a misfortune when a mother's love is stronger than it is wise, when the loving intentions take effect in nurture without judgment, and the children are more or less "spoiled"; indeed, that forcible term shows how everyone deplores the misdirection of one of the greatest forces in the world.

What we have just said of maternal love applies also to the love between man and woman. It is our part, as biologists, to confirm and support the novelist and the dramatist in their high emphasis on its significance. It is not merely one of the truly great things of the world, but central to it, a very mainspring of life. It is one of the transforming forces in the individual life-history, like an enthusiasm or a religion, in most of which it has played no little part; and it is a spring of conduct which has prompted much of both the heroism and the hard work of the world. The "self-interest" of which the political economist has made so much has yet not received justice from him. It is deeply, instinctively, other-interest. It is first mate-desire, then wife-interest, then family-interest; and his "keen business competition" is fundamentally akin to that of birds foraging to take home worms for their chicks.

While in the first instance a matter of individual biology and psychology, the love of the sexes is, like the parental love which follows upon it, a race-preserving impulse, and in subtle ways it saturates social life. Civilised men and women do not wear their hearts on their sleeves, and there may be an eruptive

Introduction

volcano of passion hidden beneath this lady's veil of snow, that quiet gentlemanly mask and glove of ice; but the denial one occasionally hears of any interest in the primary attraction of one sex for the other makes one doubt the health or the sanity, the sincerity or the memory, of such an ultra-stoic. On the other hand, the perversion of that in which every normal person more or less sees great possibilities of happiness and uplift brings up sadness akin to that which we experience over misdirected mother's love. What is normally one of the lights of life, a very "candle of the Lord," is flickering, fluttering out. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Having as biologists given long attention to the problems of sex, discussed by one of us in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" (ninth edition, etc.), articles, "Reproduction" and "Sex"; and by both of us in "The Evolution of Sex" (first published in 1889, new edition 1901), and in the "Moral Evolution of Sex" (Evergreen, Edinburgh, 1896), we have not felt ourselves at liberty to refuse, amid many pressing claims of work, the request of the editor of this series that we should state in simple language our position in regard to some of those more general aspects which are subjects of perplexity and of practical difficulty in human life, and never perhaps more than to-day. We attempt this, not as pointing to any pinnacle aloof from sex-temptations; not as holding in our hands ready-made solutions for the sex-problems of modern civilised life;

Introduction

but in the hope that a discussion fundamentally from the biological and evolutionary point of view, and its associated psychological and social ones, may be of service.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER	
I THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SEX	9
II SEX-IMPULSES IN MANKIND	18
III SOCIETY'S JUDGMENTS	22
IV ADOLESCENCE	30
V GUIDANCE IN ADOLESCENCE	35
VI SELF-CONTROL	43
VII MARRIED LIFE	46

Problems of Sex

CHAPTER I

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SEX

JUST as maternal love is no prerogative of mankind, but emerges in the human mother with the organic momentum of her million of ancestral motherhoods, so the sex-impulse must always be thought of as part of our great prehuman inheritance. We hasten to say that in another sense human love in any of its expressions is always something distinctive as compared with love among animals, since to man — a rational creature in some measure conscious of his own history, capable of reasoned discourse, and with at least the potentialities of a social person within him — all things became new, including the primary impulses and emotions, the raw materials of morality, the springs of conduct which he inherited from his prehuman ancestors.

But the point of view we wish to begin with is that these sex-impulses, which are at once the glory and the shame of mankind — and this increasingly throughout the ages — have an inconceivably long history behind them, and spring up within us with a tremendous

Problems of Sex

organic momentum. The touch of nature that makes the whole world kin is nowhere more manifest than in the sex-life to which it owes its continuance and its ecstasy; and in the fact of our affiliation to other mammals, to their ancestors, and to the humbler though scarcely less beautiful ancestors of these, we read at once a warning and an encouragement.

A warning, because there are elements in our sex-impulses which require to be damped down as out of date, which, if allowed to develop, will be as tares strangling out wheat, and too often indeed gain dominance and drive men wild and mad. An encouragement, because we can discern, looking backwards, how sex-love has evolved in fineness without losing in intensity, how it has become more complicated, more beautiful, more lasting. This gives us some confidence when we look forward at the path man must travel before he gets free from the risk of a reversion which still so often drags his evolution in the mud.

There is much to be said for beginning, as teachers and parents increasingly do, both our own sex-studies and our children's needed sex-initiations amid the world of flowers. Thereafter amid the cryptogamic plants we readily search down into the microscopic secrets of fertilisation and development; and, by way of the fern and conifer, return to the flowering plants, furnished now with a reinterpreted clue to their origin and their functioning, their structure and their beauty, far subtler than we suspected before. Yet, before spending even a single day in such laboratory

The Natural History of Sex

observations and their elucidations, we may learn much in the fields or in our gardens. Indeed, for the main idea and attitude of our sex-studies, we have literally but to "consider the lilies." Not cut lilies, however, as both churchman and botanist have been mostly wont to do, there upon altar, here upon study table; but, quite literally, "how they grow"—leaf and flower, nutritive and reproductive, self-maintaining and species-maintaining. Here is not only the simple rhythmic unity of biology, but the organic basis of morals; and it is largely from losing sight of this that the long succession of "systems of moral philosophy" which its professors so faithfully chronicle, so learnedly comment upon, have lost their hold upon men, or have never gained it.

Honestly considering our lily, however, at its climax of perfection, in stature and blossom, beauty and fragrance, what is its secret? The symbol of purity; but why? Because it has something to be pure. Search nature through; there is no more open and simple yet magnificent expression of sex, naked and unashamed, in all the organic world. Whereas, is it not in the shirking of all such life-facts that there lies the most fatal weakness of our moral philosophy books, as of all conventional sermonisings, whether from pulpit, platform, or study chair? The physician, the alienist, the criminologist, have all been compelled to examine ugly facts, which all concerned with prevention have so far to face also. But even this inevitable phase of painful realism may become hopeful instead of hopeless, in pro-

Problems of Sex

portion as we possess clear knowledge and discernment that not disease and ugliness, but health and beauty are the essential characteristics of the normal reproductive life. Thus considered, our lily becomes again a talisman of purity, a symbol of hope, a sign of assurance. Yet, after all, it is but one expression of the Protean life-miracle of beauty and perfection ever renewed.

Leaving, however, the child to admire and wonder among the lilies, and the moral philosopher to reconsider them and his system together, we may best turn for immediate practical suggestion to the animal kingdom, and ask how through it there may lie ways towards man's.

In the lower reaches of the animal kingdom the two sexes are often quite like one another externally. Thus, in many cases, no one can tell a male starfish from a female starfish, or a male sea-urchin from a female sea-urchin. At this humble level, as one would expect, there is a great deal of the haphazard in the production of offspring. The eggs and the sperms are liberated into the sea, and if the sperms (the milt in fishes) are liberated near the laid eggs (the spawn in fishes) fertilisation occurs. For within a short distance the sperms are attracted (in a way that is imperfectly understood) to enter the eggs. When a spermatozoon enters an ovum, the latter usually becomes non-receptive to others. The state of affairs that we have just sketched may be spoken of as the first grade on the ladder of sex — the sexes are superficially alike, and the fertili-

The Natural History of Sex

sation of the eggs, on which the beginning of new lives depends, is more or less haphazard. This implies huge numbers of both eggs and sperms, and we may venture to say that this overproduction of both lasts long after the necessity for it is past. Perhaps even man has also thus to pay for his long pedigree.

It can be readily understood that haphazard fertilisation is wasteful, and that any improvement upon it would be likely to be rewarded by survival. This consideration leads us to recognise the second step on the ladder of sex — where the two sexes are still very like each other externally, but where the presence of the one attracts the other. In this way, fertilisation is more likely to be secured; a step has been taken towards economy. We may illustrate this second grade in sex-evolution by reference to the familiar case of the salmon. The female makes a furrow in the gravelly bed of the river and lays her eggs there; the attendant male is stimulated, by the presence of the eggs, to liberate the sperms or milt. Many of the thousands of sperms are doubtless lost, but the method is much less wasteful than that of the first grade.

A third grade¹ is represented by those animals in which what we may call the note of physical fondness is first sounded. We mean cases where the male plays with the female, caressing her, it may be dancing with her. The love-play is often extraordinary, as, for in-

¹ It must be understood that these grades do not form a linear series. The same succession of grades seems to have repeated itself along several quite distinct lines of evolution.

Problems of Sex

stance, in some newts. In diverse forms there is a courtship of touch, often prolonged and not without its refinements, before the climax is reached when the two bodies unite.

The fourth step is made when to the primary tactile courtship there is added a wealth of æsthetic appeal. There is a great diversity along many distinct lines of evolution—the trumpeting of the elephant, the song of the nightingale, the croaking of frogs, the instrumental music of many insects. There are displays of strength, of agility, and of beauty—love-dances and quaint parades. Some of the glow-worms attract their winged mates by flashes of light, some butterflies by their fragrance. Of the butterfly's method at a higher level, the musk-deer is a conspicuous example among mammals. To the physical fondness of one sex for another there is added a more or less subtle æsthetic embroidery, and there is scarce a thread of this that has not been caught up into the subtly woven cords of human "love."

To those at all acquainted with one of the most fascinating chapters in the natural history of the year, it cannot but seem either strangely unobservant or pharisaic when men or women resent any analogy between animal love-making and their own. In the first place, because we cannot deny our lineage, even though we may not be able to point to any of its precise links; in the second place, because many of the details of sex-expression and courtship which are found elaborated here and there among the lower animals are caught up

The Natural History of Sex

as minor elements in the higher reaches of evolution; in the third place, because it is impossible to withhold admiration for the artistic character of many animal courtships, which put man's often too rough-and-ready manners to utter shame.

That the parades and displays, the dances and songs of animals are accompanied by emotions analogous to ours, appears to most naturalists a necessary assumption, though direct proof is confessedly difficult. In many cases, apart from any immediate gratification of natural desire, the mates look as if they liked each other. They pine when they are separated, and, if they are not glad to be reunited, they have an extraordinary power of counterfeiting joy! We say, then, that in the fourth grade on the ladder of love, where the two sexes are often very different in appearance,¹ there has been added to the stimulus of touch a whole gamut of æsthetic appeal, and to the primary physical fondness an emotional expression to which we must give the name of love.

There is, however, a fifth grade on the ladder of love, as that is illustrated in the animal kingdom; we refer to cases where the mated male and female work together, and where they remain associated for a considerable

¹ There are cases of far wider contrast than in ourselves, or indeed in any vertebrates: for instance, crustaceans and insects, in which the sexes have been taken for different genera, nay, referred much farther apart. We suspect, indeed, that sex-differentiation has far more suggestiveness for the origin of species than any school of evolutionists has as yet recognised.—See our "Evolution" (concluding chapter), Home University Series (Williams and Norgate, 1911).

Problems of Sex

time, it may be for life. It is true of many birds that the cock and hen collaborate in building the nest and in caring for the young. Some are faithful to each other while the breeding period lasts; others, like the eagles, are said to mate for life. In mammals also we find examples of lasting partnerships on a monogamous basis, where, as it seems to us, animal love reaches its highest level, surviving the excitements of the reproductive period, steadying itself in the wider sympathy which is at once the condition and the result of practical co-operation, broadening itself, too, in its altruism as it laps the family in its folds, surviving even its dispersal.

As we look back on the evolution of love in the animal kingdom — of which we have given the merest sketch — we notice that there is, on the whole, at one level after another, a tendency to dissimilarity between the sexes. At first so like each other that it requires a microscope to distinguish them, they tend to become divergent. In technical language, sexual dimorphism tends to become more frequent and more conspicuous as we ascend the series. With growing dimorphism the essential functions of the males and the females become more and more different, their habits of life diverge, and to the primary contrasts of maleness and femaleness there are added all manner of secondary expressions, which may usually be designated masculine and feminine. This contrast of secondary sex-characters is familiar in cases like peacock and peahen, lion and lioness, stag and hind, and it reaches its subtlest

The Natural History of Sex

expression in man and woman. It saturates through and through the organism, manifesting itself in mind as well as in body, in intellect as well as in emotion, and part of its profound biological importance is that it defines the various modes of preferential mating.

CHAPTER II

SEX-IMPULSES IN MANKIND

CONSIDERING the proportions of this Tract, we must not linger over the fascinating subject of the loves of animals. We have recognised three notes — physical fondness, emotional (and perhaps intellectual) sympathy, and, in higher reaches, both instinctive and intelligent, a willingness to live together in practical co-operation. Between this and human love what difference is there? There are certainly several differences of great importance.

In the first place, the whole matter — of sex-impulse, sex-instincts, love, courtship, mating — is lifted on to the plane of a clear self-consciousness. Man's real distinctiveness from his nearest allies depends on his power of building up general ideas, and of controlling his conduct in relation to ideals. He has reason, conduct, and language, in contrast to the intelligence, behaviour, and the few "words" which are the most we can credit to the highest animals. Moreover, he is fundamentally a social person. All of which makes a world of difference. Pathways are opened to great heights and to great depths.

Man not only loves, but he knows that he loves. He thinks and speaks and dreams about love. He has ideas

Sex-Impulses in Mankind

on the subject, and ideals to which he would make his love conform. He not only feels sex-impulses, he passes them under the review of his judgment. Even in spite of himself, love has acquired ethical value.

There are other differences connected with man's share in a social life, often of an extremely complex sort. He has to think socially, considering the gratification of his sex-impulses not only in relation to another beside himself, but in their social consequences, immediate and possible. He may rage and rebel against existing social sentiment; he may make up his mind to act in a manner prejudicial to existing social institutions; he may go on to profess the utmost sex-anarchism; but the surrounding social sentiment, conventions, and institutions none the less remain, and have to be reckoned with, and this when his fiercest stormings are over. He may resolve and strive towards changing them, but he cannot ignore them. If he cross certain limits, society will punish him: here, it may be, lightly; there, it may be, too sternly, too continuously; it is seldom really indifferent.

Another important fact is that social evolution, which is continually making the societary fabric more complicated, is apt to interfere with individual development in regard to sex as in regard to much else. When we think of such highly evolved animal societary forms as the beehive, the ant-hill, or the termitary, we recognise that the perfected socialism of such an organisation has implied a quite extraordinary submergence of the individual, and notably in the matter of reproduction.

Problems of Sex

In the beehive the vast majority of the population — the workers — are sterile females; and of the drones or males, who form quite a small percentage of the whole, only a very few at the most are ever functional. And again, in the vast population of the even more complex termitary, the great majority — all the soldiers and workers — are arrested in their sex-development; remaining, as it were, permanent children of both sexes. And in a quite analogous way, though it is often spoken of as if it were a new problem peculiar to mankind, the complexity of human social organisation tends to segregate a large fraction of the population from the normal expression of sex-impulses. The consequence of this, and in our age and civilisation perhaps especially, is not only much unhappiness, but much morbidity, disease, and crime. It is for man as a rational social being, free from the inevitable tyranny of a society reared on an instinctive basis, to rearrange his social organisation on the one hand so that there be more, not less, of normal life-opportunity for its normal members; and, on the other hand, more and more of those high opportunities of the species-regarding life in which the universality may compensate for the indirectness. Here are born Plato's children of the spirit; here, from of old, woman has had her sisterhoods, man his manifold orders and associations.

Human sex-problems get beyond purely biological treatment because man is a rational and a social organism, but they differ also from those of most animals in a somewhat remarkable and purely biological respect

Sex-Impulses in Mankind

—namely, this, that in man there is no well-marked seasonal punctuation of natural desire. There may be a maximum in spring, when he shares in the universal renaissance of vitality, but his appetite is strong throughout the year. In women there is a monthly rhythm, but no definite seasonal punctuation. What a contrast this is to what we see in most birds, where the sex-tide falls after the pairing season is over, and leaves the creature normally placid until the following spring. Man's unpunctuated sexuality is an obvious complication of the problem. Yet do we not see the same persistence of sex-intensity throughout the seasons arising in several of our domesticated animals, and, in certain cases, with something of a corresponding development and persistence of individuality? So that here our very difficulty is upon the line of progress. Who would wish to return to the simpler seasonal level, and accept the reduction of individuality which that implies?

CHAPTER III

SOCIETY'S JUDGMENTS

THE judgments pronounced by society on irregular expressions of the sex-impulse are apt to be extreme either in their leniency or in their condemnation. In regard to those judgments whose aim is *practical*—implying not so much praise or blame (decision as to which presents the utmost difficulty), but “Shall we foster this and eliminate that?”—we wish at once to say that we do not share in the mood of extreme toleration which is sometimes cultivated to-day. It would pardon all evil without perhaps understanding any; and it must be despised even by the condoned evil-doers themselves. To have a good stock of wholesome prejudices against dirt and devilry, against lust and unnatural vice, is a sounder social position than that milk-and-water timidity of decision which condones all that “evolution” evolves, which would indeed soon make a very drab affair of our social fabric. Such excessive leniency, which is afraid to stamp down, or it may be to stamp out, what is evidently bringing man nearer to, not farther from, the beast, betokens a slackening of intellectual and moral fibre. Everyone should be agreed in disapproval of the man with a superabundance of “mud at the bottom of his eye.” At the same

Society's Judgments

time it is useless to ignore the fact that even a so-called "civilised society" shows the outcrop of many strata at different stages of evolution. It is useless for the austere and cloistered philosopher to make doctrinaire statements, and impossible for the field or laboratory *naturalist* to formulate the precise limits of legitimate sexuality. Nor can the anthropologist as yet be of much help to us; his world also is too Protean. We are probably in sexual ways only too mingled already; socially and spiritually, as well as physically mongrelised.

Even within one society the diversity of human specialisation is enormous, and the antipodal types are apt to misunderstand one another. Contrast the exquisite nervous co-ordination implied in the alertness and dexterity of the highly skilled musician or surgeon, with the awkwardness and slowness of many an unskilled labourer, who, nevertheless, plays with huge masses like Hercules with his club.

So it is not for those who are specialised on this and that line of cerebral development to legislate for the men of thews and sinews; and what we wish to suggest is that the same may be true in regard to degrees of sexuality. It is reported of one of the American enthusiasts for bodily vigour, that, happening to see a Harvard athlete make a record in lifting heavy weights so many times from the ground, he threw off his coat, and, though not "in training" at the time, continued lifting the weights for four hours on end, far more than doubling the previous maximum. And just as such a

Problems of Sex

feat seems like a story from another world, to men who have lost muscular tone, or who have never had any experience of it, so we must protest that it is not for philosophers to dictate to the world's workers the wholesome limits of sexual appetite.

Another reason for plasticity of judgment must be found in the sad fact that many of our social conditions are dismally abnormal, and are directly provocative of abnormalities in sexual expression. In illustration, we may refer to the too frequent deficiency in one of the primary needs of family life—namely, room. The crowding together of inmates of both sexes and of various ages is still excessive for well-nigh half the nation, is often hideous, and the impossibility of privacy creates situations which are revolting. Here, again, plain speaking is needed; indeed, speaking cannot be too plain. The pity is that the peasant, and the town-dweller, too, does not oftener remind us:

“Our daughters with base-born babies
Have wandered forth in their shame;
If your daughters had slept where they did,
They, mayhap, had done the same!”

The wonder thus is, not that roughening arises under these circumstances, too much coarsening even, too frequent debasement, and even rapes, incests, horrors beyond name; it is that, after all, the mass of our working neighbours, whose lives have been and are thus handicapped, are such decent men and women, albeit too apathetic to our ways (in these respects assuredly

Society's Judgments

better) as we to some of theirs. But this is not an excuse for letting things alone, and postponing the needed enlargement of our housing, any more than we should be deterred from beginning to cleanse tuberculosis practically away though most do not die of that disease.

There is an impression among many that great strides have been made of recent years in the improvement of housing, both in town and country; and garden cities, garden villages, garden suburbs, of which there has been so much talk, are well-nigh losing their novelty. The Town Planning Act is at work; and so on. But with the town plans of the nation before us, as they hang on the walls or lie in the portfolios of the Cities and Town Planning Exhibition now on its rounds through the three kingdoms, we realise how little has as yet been accomplished. There are suggestive indications, hopeful experiments, successful beginnings, but very few of all these; as our town populations go, a percentage still trifling is thus provided for, and when appreciable it is more of the middle than the working class.

Taking all together, as a national total, we have doubtless by this time invested the value of a warship or two—let us hope, if you will, even of three; but what we stand in need of is an expenditure corresponding to that of a war. Peace terms are, no doubt, preferable; we need to invest in housing throughout our cities on a scale corresponding to that of two or three of the main railway systems which serve them; let us begin, then, by aiming at something like our current

Problems of Sex

expenditure on motors. This is not wandering beyond the specific problem before us in these pages; it is not merely to one among the many conditions of sexual hygiene and moral uplift that we are here addressing ourselves, but assuredly a main, a fundamental one — the reconstruction of the home, the safeguard of the family, surely the essential theme, and, therefore, a task for moralisers everywhere. If so, it is time for all active moralisers, such as those for whom we are here writing, to be uniting with the housing reformers, to be arousing all classes from their apathy. The workers themselves, and their municipal representatives, are still mostly asleep; while the very Government which passed the Town Planning Act, with the approval of all parties, is still leaving its one great practical opportunity, the one possible model city of Rosyth, to “Ministerial deliberations” which are essentially but bureaucratic delays, and to “local enterprise” — which is mostly of the usual sort — and thus with only too obvious beginnings towards a combination of the housing and the moral evils of the industrial town with those of the maritime one.

More subtle, but yet more severe and disastrous, provocatives to sexual irregularities than those of family overcrowding alone are to be found in those social arrangements which leave large numbers of adults temporarily or permanently unmated. We are too much apt to ignore the appalling disease statistics which are in turn but an indication of the vices of every standing army, in which most of the men are necessarily

Society's Judgments

celibate; and to the surplus population of women who must remain unwed, we have similarly as yet given far too little thought and still less care. Let us look at the latter once more in the light of the beehive. The "queen" is no queen, but an imprisoned mother; the "neuters" are no neuters, but the busy sisters of the hive. For the first an almost unbroken imprisonment, the narrow home of motherhood; for the others the life of energy and of labour — the freedom, the sunlight, and the flowers.

Here is your contrast of house-mother and New Woman — sure enough as old as the world. Yet let us not overpity the queen-mother; for what mother will but smile and say: "Pity her? Rather envy her — was I not happiest with my babes?" Nor let us over-envy these free and happy workers — rich though they return to their hive. They have highly developed brains, but most of them die young. And their vocation, like that of most of our emancipated women, has been rather a temporal than a spiritual one. Nor can we forget that each carries her poisoned sting — no new and strange weapon, but part of the very organ of maternity, the ovipositor, the egg-placer, with which the queen lays each egg in its appointed cell.

Parallelisms of all this in human life are obvious. The passive Hausfrau of recent if not contemporary Germany, the "New Woman" of America or England, are each as old as civilisation. Every one of our "domestics" is a New Woman, a worker-bee, who has gone out to labour in the world; lady doctor and nurse,

Problems of Sex

teacher and typist, dressmaker, mill girl, shop girl, and all the rest, are the New Women proper — the worker-bees. Those women who call themselves New and Advanced, and what not, without mothering or working, are at best only mimics of the fussing drones; some, indeed, call these by harsher names, “parasites” within the hive.

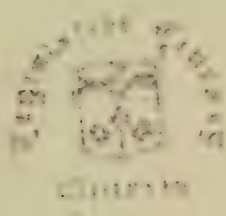
The domestic is nearest the home, and so feels its instinctive feminine interest more than do her sister workers in the outer world. Her domestic functions, too, are all more normally feminine ones. She feeds the household, cares for the children and all the rest, like the good worker-bee, and so oftenest turns to marriage — oftenest, too, to motherhood without marriage. And with this interpretation of a familiar and always pathetic occurrence we must conclude our parallel. It is enough to recognise that the acquiescence which the instinct-ruled bees show in the submergence of the individual and the relegation of reproductive functions, cannot be expected and should not be desired in rational human societies. We are here face to face with a difficulty which silences harsh judgments and demands social reorganisation.

But, granted that overtolleration means both moral and intellectual slackness, that doctrinaire decisions as to the limits of sexual temperance are futile, and that abnormal social conditions are responsible for much of the abnormal sexuality, there remains great need for a revision of social judgments in regard to particular questions. It seems, for instance, that social judgment

Society's Judgments

on passionate lapses from virtue, or loss of self-control, is sometimes unreasonably and unprofitably severe. When the lover and his lass lose their heads before they marry, their loss of self-control will certainly not make their married life happier; but is it wholly profitable that their punishment should be artificially added to by a social stigma, which, by its lasting obloquy, is harsher than ever was the public censure and penance of churches, Catholic or Reformed, for these were followed by forgiveness, social as well as ecclesiastical?

Two principles must be kept in mind. (1) A sexually vicious habit of mind and body is something far more evil and destructive than is any single or even occasional lapse through extreme temptation. (2) Irregularities in sexual behaviour or conduct have to be judged not merely by their effect on the individual, but by their influence on the race; and the latter influence may operate either organically through the channels of inheritance, or socially by affecting social institutions and social sentiment.



CHAPTER IV

ADOLESCENCE

WHILE experts differ in regard to the precise definition of adolescence, and claim to have recognised, by the more careful study characteristic of recent years, a number of minor rhythms or subperiods in preadult human life, everyone is agreed that there is a main node on the ascending curve of development, when childish ways and childish things are put away, when juvenile characters are for the most part slipped off, as a crab slips off its shell or a bird changes its feathers, when adult characters are gradually put on, when the life begins to take definitive shape, when the limit of growth comes within sight, and when sex-impulses, at first mere passing whispers, compel a hearing to their mingled voices. For our practical purposes, that is, keeping to the elemental facts of sex, it may be said to comprise the years between sixteen and twenty in boys, between fifteen and nineteen in girls; though, of course, the educationist must move the limit higher.

Referring for details to the great and crowded monograph on "Adolescence"¹ by Prof. Stanley Hall, for introduction to his smaller and more readable "Youth,"² and for primer to a compact, lucid and

¹ Appleton, London and New York.

² Appleton, London and New York.

Adolescence

accessible little volume by Dr. Slaughter,¹ we may still more briefly outline this interesting and critical period for our present purpose.

In man, as in some animals, there is an acceleration of growth associated with adolescence. This means that the energies of the organism are necessarily to a large extent preoccupied with its own internal and mainly subconscious business. And this means that the adolescent youth or girl should have plenty of rest and plenty of play. But as this is not by any means the customary treatment of the majority of adolescents, be they rich, middle-class or poor, we need not be surprised when things go sadly wrong so often as they do. Our surprise should be rather at the stability of nature, which gives us so many survivals, even after we have done our well-meaning worst.

It is not merely a matter of growth, however, for adolescence is a period of 'rearrangement and readjustment'. The adolescent organism becomes more complex, from its teeth to its nerve-paths. And with all this new differentiation, as it is best phrased technically, there also goes a process of reintegration. The organism gradually becomes—if adolescence be successful—more controlled, more unified, and more harmonious. It becomes more strongly vertebrated, more toughly and subtly knit together; its character strengthens—often through instabilities (again too often mismanaged)—to a greater stability; it gets a purpose in life. To appreciate this it is well worth our while

² Arnold, London.

Problems of Sex

to think vividly of the transition-period between tadpole and frog, or between caterpillar and butterfly,¹ so that we may take back again to human life the impression of what may be involved in the redifferentiations and reintegrations (that is, in the new complexities and new controls) which adolescence implies. In animal adolescences such as we have mentioned we see extraordinary processes of breaking down and reconstruction, crises of inflammation, losses that are the conditions of gains, and frequent mortality. Thus we begin to understand better why adolescence is so full of portent as well as promise. Well-nigh every adult has had more or less experience of the susceptibility to sickness during this period, and of the relative instability of the mental life; but the pity is that we so largely forget all this as we outgrow it, and so fail of sympathy when our opportunity to our juniors comes.

We have left to the last the profoundest change of all, for it is in adolescence that the promptings of sex-impulses make themselves normally and often formidably assertive. In various ways — for instance, by the liberation of chemical excitants (the “hormones” of recent physiology) which pass from the essential reproductive organs and saturate through and through body and brain — the whole being is more or less changed, not only externally, but in its inmost recesses. The transformation may be swift and violent in the beast, almost violent and often dangerous in man; in fact,

¹ See Thomson's “Biology of the Seasons” (Melrose, London, 1911).

Adolescence

like spring in different lands, it shows all variations in its coming, from sudden surprise to a slowness almost imperceptible in its stages, or it may be with arrests which discourage the watcher.

The fuller expression of sex, both in its primary and secondary characters, is undoubtedly the dominant fact of adolescence, but we have taken it last and not first, partly to emphasise that there is much else going on which, if wisely directed and developed, will go far towards keeping the sex-life in right channels; and partly to suggest that great care should be taken not to make the adolescent boy or girl self-conscious on the subject. It must be clearly understood that while the period is sometimes dangerous and always momentous, it is seldom in the main an anxious time to the youth; nor should it be made so. Normally, though fatigues and languors, or even depressions, may alternate with its bursts of activity, these are simply curable, for the most part by rest and wholesome exercise, by food and sleep. It is a joyous and exciting time of new feelings and emotions, of emancipations and illuminations, when human life acquires a new interest, when the call of society is realised, when the heart turns naturally to poetry and music or religion as well as to sex. For every adolescent has in him much of the poet and hero as well as lover. It is largely the world and we who are to blame, as well as himself if he grow up either into a hooligan or a libertine, wither into a money-grubber, settle into a drudge, or shrivel up into futile respectability, paralysed culture, or the self-conscious

Problems of Sex

clot of inhibitions which is too commonly the substitute for self-control: as if self-control were not self-expression, self-activity.

For the girl as well as for the boy, and in some respects even more so, this discipline of self-expression is essential in adolescence. We have said that plenty of rest is required, but it must be understood that forced inactivity may be as disastrous as forced overwork. Our problem is to see that routine tasks, whether in school or in household, are not carried to the limit of time and strength, but that opportunity and energy are left for those spontaneous activities, those independent enthusiasms, and those self-devised explorations of life which are at once the surest preventive of the morbidity so often the Nemesis of repression, and the most natural means of sifting and strengthening those individual gifts which will in later life be the mainspring of the most effective social service.

CHAPTER V

GUIDANCE IN ADOLESCENCE

THE changes of adolescence mark the beginning of a new life, and the period has its perils — that bad health may take a grip of the constitution; that mental instability may become chronic, or may swing beyond the limits of safety; and that vicious sexual habits may be acquired, to the prejudice of future vigour and happiness. In our existing society at its best we may fairly hope that the risks are being lessened rather than increased, and this for several reasons. There are saner and franker relations between parents and their children than there used to be; mothers and fathers can more commonly help each other to understand. Medical as well as athletic standards of fitness and health are coming to be regarded as part of the common-sense regimen of life. Wise physicians who set prevention far above cure are becoming commoner, psychological insight and sympathy are transforming doctor and dominie alike, and thus bringing them more together, and it is more usual for people to look at things in a practical, scientific way, seeking to make the best of them. But there are many who ask for guidance.

First, then, the robust common-sense counsels of the family doctor: Look after the health of the body, let

Problems of Sex

the youth endure hardness, let him learn to play well, scout well, and work well, and let him have a share of the real responsibilities of his parents and elders, not merely minor and semi-fictitious ones. And similarly, with reasonable adjustments, for girls.

Secondly, there is much also to be said for the correlated advice of every true educator, to store the mind with no mere information, whether conned in the schools of humanities or sciences, but with good and vital things, to thrill it with noble examples, and, for our present purpose here, above all to call in the help of the artist, the poet, the musician, and of the truly religious, to keep out or live down all unworthy images by those ennobling to love and life. The youth may and must thus be encouraged to feel "My mind to me a kingdom is"; and once awakened to deal with this kingdom's many and compelling interests, with its developing resources and powers within, its new argosies ever arriving from without, he may still stumble, but he is not likely to go basely wrong. Ugly disclosures of incontinence and vice are too frequently forced upon the eye both in town and country, imprinting memories which stimulate even in dreams; but one main counteractive, at least, is to have the mind not only stored with noble pictures from the vast heritage of culture, but accustomed to some power of selection and representation. Here is at least one great factor in personality.

Thirdly, there is the characteristic scientific counsel that the path of safety is that of knowledge. This

Guidance in Adolescence

works out in various ways. To know the facts of sex as they are exposed in flowers, lifts the whole matter above the level of pruriency. To know the facts of sex as they are seen in common types of the animal world, half hidden and half revealed; to see courtship and pairing — in pets, for instance — as a matter of course; to know — in the routine of the farm, for instance — the practical responsibilities associated with sex; to become aware that there is nothing in sex to snigger at — in this there is great gain. We have not only to “let the ape and tiger die,” we have also, as the late Bishop Creighton said, to seek to get rid of “the primitive donkey.” Not only a garden, or even individual pets, but some deliberate inclusion of the rabbits and fowls which save country children from so much vulgar or tormenting curiosity, are thus indicated for our elementary schools.

As the adolescent grows he will get more than information out of this long familiar and, therefore, unprurient biology of sex in plant and animal. He will then see, or readily be helped to see, his own experience in its biological setting, as part of a world-wide process, in an evolutionary light, in line with the evolution of love in the animal kingdom to which we have already alluded. It may humble him to recognise that adolescent experience in mankind is sometimes unpleasantly recapitulative of what occurs in the beast, but it will give him heart to feel that his own adolescence is also part and parcel of a great evolutionary movement, and that he is sharing in the long ascent from crude ex-

Problems of Sex

pressions of physical attraction and fondness to the utterance and maintenance of spiritual affection. According to its measure on this ascent, each self thus learns to answer that inmost cry of the adolescent: "And how shall I my true love know?"

The adolescent period is one of personal sifting under the influence of self-criticism and social criticism. The conditions of the struggle for existence, the rules of the serious game of life, and of one's particular side and part in it, in fact all sorts of restrictions and conventions, from the law of the jungle to the latest etiquette of social behaviour, begin to close in upon the individualities, the idiosyncrasies, the peculiarities, the distinctive *variations* of the young life. The organism must run the gauntlet of criticism; and often it needs all that this discipline can give it, if it is to survive aright. On the other hand, the criticism, whether of circumstances or of society, does not always make for progress, and many fine buds are blighted, many marred. While it may be impossible to lay down general rules, each human adolescent being so far unique, the important thing is that we should clearly realise what is happening. At present education plucks its ugly ducklings, hedges them from the water, while experience and culture scoff back their first ungainly splashings. Hence largely, with all our good intentions, the modern scarcity of genius and the lateness of its song.

In the fourth place, while the juvenile period is particularly the period of plasticity — that is, of sus-

Guidance in Adolescence

ceptibility to the changeful influences of the environment or of nurture in the widest sense, this plasticity is continued through the earlier years of adolescence at least. The youth is still susceptible, but he is more critical. Soon, only too soon, he will be "set." Undesirable youthful veneer is often slipped off; effective veneer is often confirmed; and it may be said that modifications for good or ill that survive the adolescent period are very likely to persist throughout life.

This leads us to recall what has been said so often since the beginning of things, that, sneer as the cynic may at "calf-love" and the like, there is no safeguard for a youth more wholesome than "falling in love," which often means rising on his lower self to higher things, and has always that virtue which Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection."

Perhaps we have said enough to show that the period of adolescence is not to be thought of as Arnold of Rugby, for instance, seems to have done, as a dangerous period to be hurried over as quickly as possible. Dangerous period, truly, but rich in opportunities of development, the taking or losing of which will mean much in after-life. Hence the grave insufficiency of that merely athletic treatment for reduction of the sex-excitability of adolescents, on which so many schoolmasters seem still to rely. Its place, its value, its necessity even, had no doubt been too much lost sight of, and with disastrous results; but is not youth to-day too much losing the poet in the footballer? And in this

Problems of Sex

regard has not the great art as well as athletic of dancing to be rescued alike from its deterioration on one side and its exclusion on the other?

Both in regard to the difficulties of adolescence and those of sex-control in later life, the deepest precept of all is that of practical idealism, that we should seek "to hitch our wagon to a star." This has been well expressed in scientific and educational form in an important paper on "The Relation of the Sexes," by Mr. James Oliphant,¹ which broadly traces how, in the course of civilisation, there has been established the wholesome tradition which seeks to sublime sexuality by associating it with the best that is in us — chivalry, devotion, self-control, worship. Half unconsciously, at best too fitfully, but for its preservation and its well-being, humanity has idealised the sexual impulse, has detected its true inwardness, and has refined passion from its rudest nerve-storm to its highest emotion and utterance; and this not only in saint and in poet, but in some measure in all to whom they appeal. In literature and art the ideal types of love in its sublimest aspects have been immortalised, and with these the minds of those who rejoice in their youth should be filled, not as an educational artifice, but because thus a deeper meaning and joy may be found. To fail in duly honouring the sex-instinct, and to treat it as a mere temptation of the enemy of souls, as a mistaken asceticism too frequently has done, means forcing it back in isolation as an animal or a demonic

¹ *International Journal of Ethics*, April, 1899.

Guidance in Adolescence

passion, and thus often an overwhelming or a corrupting one. Whereas the lesson to be learned, until happily it becomes organic, is from the first potentiality of physical passion at puberty to infuse this with the higher emotions — nay, even from childhood with its fairy tales. Thus educated, the adolescent will control the insistent organic and Dionysiac impulses into unity; and thus mature them to a worthy part in the complex, fateful drama of life. The legitimate pride of birth, the high standard of cleanness and fitness, the honouring of women, the love of children, the social self-respect restricted to no aristocracy, is the opening secret before every race, and the test by which they stand or fall far more than are those even of industry or of arms.

In summary, then, the first and essential thing for youth and maid to know is that sex is not of the devil, near though he may lurk to it. They are not to suppose that their young sex-wonderings, sex-hopes and dreams and attractions are dark and evil temptations merely, to be suppressed with shame and secrecy. They should be told, honestly and hopefully, that these are the normal and necessary growth-stirrings of life, that these fitful whisperings are the new voicings of the very life from which they themselves have come, and from which other life is seeking to come in due time also. Meanwhile these stirrings need to be firmly controlled, indeed, but not silenced; for in them, or intertwined with them, lie all the elements which have made life fullest and most beautiful in flower and fruit, in

bird and beast, and in man and woman above all. Here, in short, is life's great opportunity of development, of ennoblement — of self, for another, it may be of another. And if passion press and thorns spring on its rose, none will fall to the lust of lust who quest in the love of love.

Finally, but a word of youth in its modern environment, ill-suited as that for the most part is. Of all books we can name in these pages, there is none so vital, none so simple, none so direct, as "The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets," by Jane Addams,¹ of Hull House, the virtual abbess of Chicago. This, in fact, is indispensable to all who would deal with this great problem of our adolescents, and also with our cities as these affect them. We know of no book in any language to compare with it in its large-hearted vision; and if any book in our time has deserved all that publishers and reviewers can do for its cheap and wide diffusion respectively, it is this one; since from it might come — we would almost say must come — a real and substantial uplift to the cause of youth and to the bettering of our cities together.

¹ Macmillan, 1911.

CHAPTER VI

SELF-CONTROL

IN the ideals of chastity, clean living, and sexual temperance, there is the common element of self-control — a discipline normally and unquestionably on the side of progressive evolution. Since naturalists and physicians, like investigators of all other kinds, tend to study what has most interested them, those occupied with sex are presumably not among the most indifferent to its elemental calls and impulses. This gives added significance to their consensus against that facile and popular laxity — of thought, speech and deed — too common among young men. For, indeed, among those best entitled to authoritative judgment, there is practical unanimity that health is when man controls his sexual impulses, and danger when sex controls the man. Can we make this more explicit for the sake of those who are keen to pay their own high premiums to experience, or who are unaware how terribly convincing the data of the sex-specialists have become?

(1) He must be either very self-confident or very ignorant who is unaware of the narrowness of the way of absolutely normal sex-expression. It is only a very perfect love that casts out all fear. Just in proportion

as man is highly evolved is he liable to all manner of instabilities — hells to match his heavens. And just because there must be self-abandonment upon the very heights of love, it behoves man to win his right to this by a discipline of self-control.

For the warning of those who think lightly of these things and would “go the pace,” sure that they can pull up in time, there are the terrible volumes of sexual pathology. There is sexual hyperæsthesia or the abnormal exaggeration of sexual excitability, an exaggeration all but universal in some measure through all our civilisations. There is auto-erotism or masturbation, which often wrecks both body and mind; there are loathsome and sinister perversions of the attractions between the sexes, and repulsive fleshly attractions between those of the same sex; there is the Nemesis of uncontrolled sexuality which may make an old man a satyr or a terror to little children; and if these and other hells be escaped by the persistently uncontrolled, there is that of a mind which is preoccupied with lustful thoughts and pictures, and of an eye which betrays itself in its lecherousness.

(2) But there is a higher appeal than that of fear, for every honest man knows that the controlled life in all its paths is the progressive one. “Behold the life of ease, it drifts!” Abstinence and self-restraint mean struggle, but they bring their reward of a higher happiness. If one aspires in any way to live the higher human life — say, even, the resolute intellectual life — one must endure hardness and seek to subdue

the flesh. "*Il faut faire passer son sexe par son cerveau.*" No man can hope to attain to the heights of serenity which women reach and often beneficently occupy in this regard, but it is a terrible sign of moral dissolution that it should be considered "priggish" to hold to the ideal that a man should come with a clean record to his wife and should be faithful to her for ever.

(3) But there is a higher appeal still, which is based on the fact that man is a social person. No man liveth or dieth unto himself, and uncontrolled sexuality cannot remain a purely personal vice. Our thoughts must go out to the race, to our organic share in the making of the next generation, and to the influence we have in sustaining what is good in our social tradition of clean living and of chivalry. We have to think also of the victims of selfish and cruel betrayal — and here selfishness is always cruel — and of the children they bear; of the ranks of the prostitutes which the selfishness of men (and sometimes of women as well) is continually recruiting. It is enough for the scientific, the moralised and the religious — in short, the socialised — to know that uncontrolled sexuality is wrong and sinful. All that we have done in these few lines is to give concrete expression to these concepts.

CHAPTER VII

MARRIED LIFE

IT is a not infrequent insincerity which speaks as if sex-sins were confined to the hot-headed and turbulent period of youth, as if marriage made a breakwater, in the shelter of which even frail barks could disport themselves safely. This view is not borne out by the facts of life. For one of these facts is that the married state gives opportunity for an uncontrolled self-indulgence and for the development of an exaggerated sexuality. It thus might tend to sink to the level of monogamous prostitution. We cannot help recognising that the intemperate pair might be in danger of falling towards the ethical level of the harlots and profligates of our streets. This may seem a hard and cruel thing to say, but the first step towards improvement is to face the facts frankly, to recognise clearly what our risks are. Moreover, it is bare justice to the otherwise too ascetic teachings of the religious past.

Overindulgence is bad enough, but it brings worse evils in its train. For the dismal treatises on the pathology of sex, to which we have already alluded, which form perhaps the most terrible reading in the world, are full of records of the abnormalities of behaviour which

Married Life

ensue when satisfaction can no longer be found in normal ways. Sometimes, indeed, as age increases, when it is to be expected that "desire shall fail," exaggerated sexuality grows to be maniacal. The old man may become a leering satyr, even an ogre, and the old woman the sensualist witch among the three traditional types of her perversion.

The individual solution for married lovers is primarily one of temperance. It is no new or unattainable ideal to retain throughout married life a large measure of that self-control which always forms the organic basis of the enthusiasm and idealism of lovers, yet is not sufficiently realised as no mere asceticism or coldness in married life, but as renewing their very courtship also. And as old attempts at the regulation of sexual life have constantly fallen from a glowing idealism into pallor or morbidness, it need hardly be said that the same fate will ever more or less befall the endeavour after temperance, so long as that lacks the collaboration of the other necessary and warmer elements.

We need a new ethic of the sexes; and this not merely, or even mainly, as an intellectual construction, but as a discipline of life—joyous indeed, yet strict as music. We need an increasing education and civism of women, and that along lines which will develop, instead of attempting to ignore, the organic contrast and complementariness of the sexes. And, as a very matter-of-fact preliminary, we need the development of a wholesome scorn for those who, in practice or

in theory, would deny to women the sovereignty of their own bodies.

As we would advise young, so must we turn to ourselves with the counsel of common sense and idealism alike, to intertwine with the cords of flesh the bonds of the spirit, to add to the fondness of lovers the sympathy of companions, and to both the gladness of husband and wife working together. Nor can we omit to mention the need for definite knowledge of sexual hygiene, since it is in ignorance rather than by vice that many forge fetters for their own bondage. To not a few, happily, nature brings its own deliverance in the form of a family which broadens marital affection and often sublimes it.

Here, as before, there is everything to be gained from a broad evolutionary outlook, which, if it warns and threatens with its disclosures of possible reversion and degeneration, at the same time encourages and heartens with its vision of the upward trend of things. As we have said elsewhere:—"The fact to be insisted upon is this, that the vague sexual attraction of the lowest organisms has been evolved into a definite reproductive impulse, into a desire often predominating over even that of self-preservation; that this, again, enhanced by more and more subtle psychical attractions, passes by a gentle gradient into the love exhibited by the higher birds and mammals, and by the average human individual.

"But the possibilities of evolution are not ended, and though some may shrink from that comparison

Married Life

of human love with its analogues in the organic series, the theory of evolution offers the precise compensation such natures require."

Those of us who go on in life, as too many still do, without recognising the possibilities of individual and of racial evolution which naturalist, cultivator and breeder from the one side, psychologist and artist from the other, are constantly demonstrating, are shut up to the conventional view that the poet and his heroine alike are exceptional creations, hopelessly beyond the everyday average of the race. There are still too many pedagogues and professors who tell you this of their boys. Whereas, admitting the idea of evolution, we are not only entitled to the hope, but logically compelled to the assurance, that these rare fruits of an apparently more than earthly paradise of love, which only the forerunners of the race have been privileged to gather, or it may be to see from distant heights, are yet the realities of a daily life towards which we and others may journey.

But are not these the words of an oversanguine Utopianism? Is not immorality sustained by married men as much as by celibates? Do not the ranks of the married yield as ugly and thick a crop of sexual perverses as do those of adolescence — and with less excuse? Are there not too many marriages which never rise beyond the fleshly level — and also too many which never attain to it? Are there not many who are enthralled by an hereditary sexual impulse of a strength which even Luther, with his liberal allowance to the

claims of the flesh, would have regarded as an anachronism? Who is sufficient for these things?

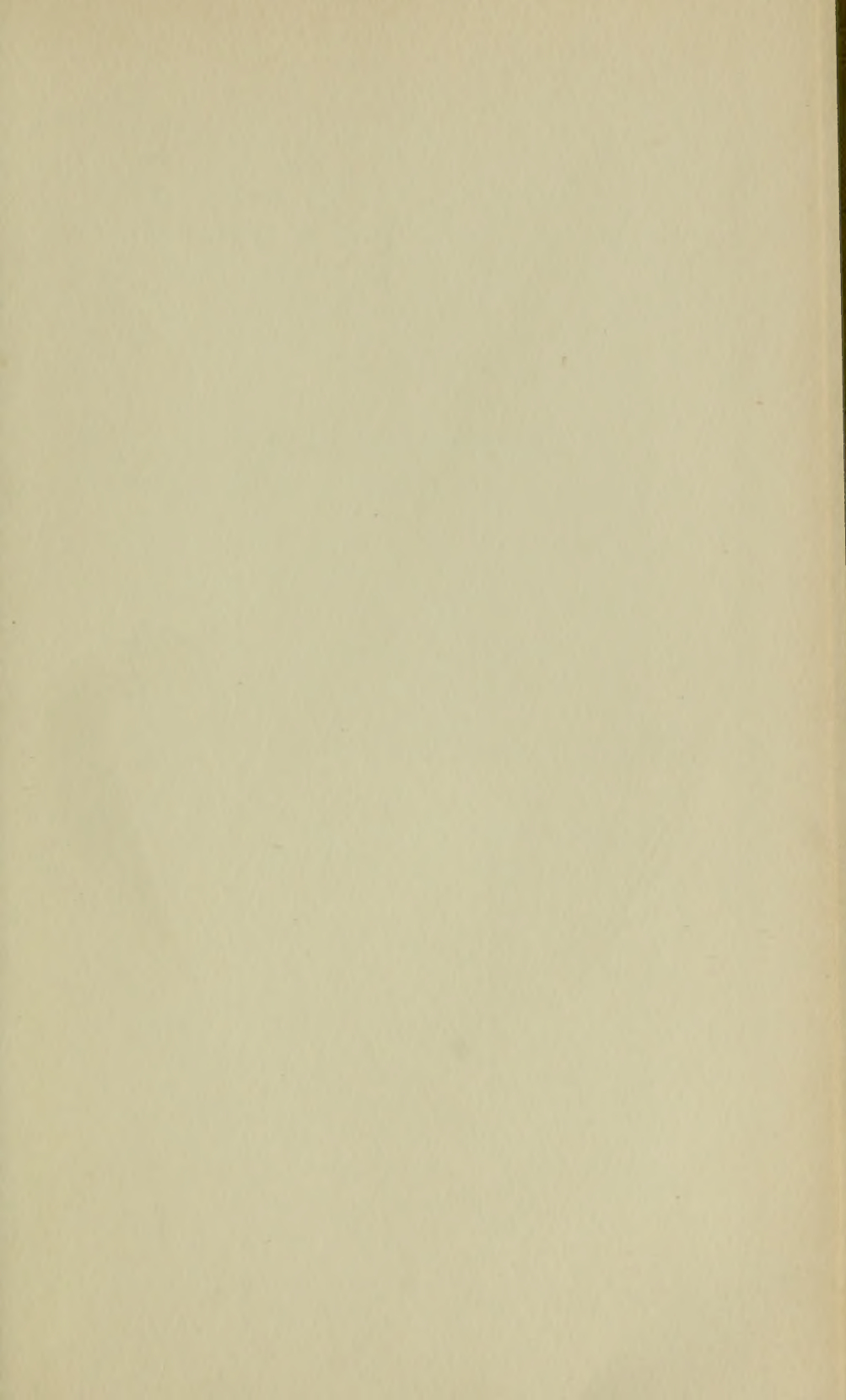
Even lovers recognise in colder moments, and the dramatist and moralist are constantly reminding them, that the complete ideal has many elements, and that, alas! complete marriage is, therefore, mathematically unattainable for humanity — no such ideally complete physical, psychical, social and ethical culmination of life being even definitely imaginable. For, even granting the possibility of occasional perfection in either sex, we have a second improbability in the simultaneous occurrence of the ideally harmonious, yet contrasted type of the opposite sex, and a further improbability of their ever meeting.

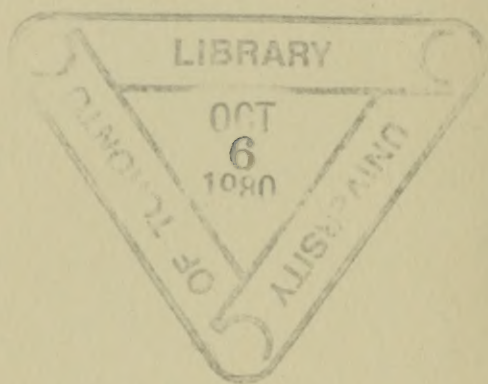
But, granting both the unattainable nature of the marriage ideal and the weakness of our average flesh, we return with hope as well as with humility to the meliorist mood of the evolutionist. Instead of reacting to the insufficiently social ideals of monk and nun, of misogynist and New Woman, we must allow our married life to be quickened by other-regarding ideals, from the simplest and most universal one — that of doing our best for our children, and next helping them to do their best with (and not merely for) themselves — until they and we together unite more fully in furthering on earth the coming of the kingdom of the ideal. Scientific in general idea, we must also be scientific in detail — creeping away from evil if we have not wings to fly from it. It may be, for instance, as Forel says, that you are handicapped by some hereditary bias of

oversexuality; that doubtless makes your sex-problem difficult; but are you sure that you are doing everything feasible to hold its excess down?

Of more difficult questions, essentially individual as these become, like the often-kindled one of divorce, it is not for our too general nature studies, our too simple social studies, to proffer solutions, where not only psychologist and dramatist, but churches and states so often and conspicuously disagree — save, indeed, to say, monogamists though we convincedly are, that it is certainly not for us to press this to the extent which makes all mis-matings irrevocable. Each pair has to face its own difficulties and dangers, and mainly alone; some from the waning of their honeymoon, others from later rifts within the lute. But all do not seem to know clearly enough that as all life is tidal, and love is life at highest, there must be ebbs as well as flows; nor yet that at deep ebb a new springtide may be at hand; nor even sufficiently how often absence makes fond. Again — “*Il ne faut pas seulement aimer, il faut le dire — bien souvent.*” Here is the best of mutual explanations, save often also silence: for even Psyche must not ask all questions; no heart can open all its mysteries, still less should express all its passing moods, but forbear no less than bear. All the old wisdoms are ever verifiable; and above all those which make for co-operation around the progressive family-rearing of which we all still know so little, the home-building which commonly needs so much thought and care; and, with or failing these, the widening ranges of

friendships and duties which are surely in some measure within the reach of all. Happy are they who keep in memory their brightening days in the past, who keep clear view of the manifold interests and causes and possibilities of the present, who have looked together into the future with courage and hope. Lives once thus truly intertwined, even if shaken or at times divergent, will usually again twine on. Happiest are those marriages which afford but little material to the dramatist, little even to the poet; at most perhaps the tale of Baucis and Philemon, and two or three homely Scottish songs. Yet, beyond their romance in youth, they are realising in age another. For ever-renewing love, and therefore renewing youth in age, are theirs; they are realising the dream of Faust, and without his evil magic, his illusive bargain. Hand in hand, singing without other audience their own quiet song, they gently fare together, through silver and golden weddings, to peaceful and honoured rest.





PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

HQ
31
T5

Thomson, (Sir) John Arthur
Problems of sex

